Sallie Mae, UNIPAC see books opening loan e-channels

Both Sallie Mae and UNIPAC recently cut deals with on-line booksellers, hoping to attract more students to their respective loan programs. VarsityBooks.com and Sallie Mae have a two-year alliance to target the college student market, while BIGWORDS.com has become the latest on-line merchant on UNIPAC's @theU site.

UNIPAC's strategy is to offer merchandise from a variety of merchants to its existing customers, who earn credits towards the repayment of their student loans. At the same time, the wide array of services and merchandise offered through vendors like BIGWORDS to site visitors should attract new customers for UNIPAC's loan offerings.

The Sallie Mae-VarsityBooks arrangement is somewhat different. VarsityBooks.com will market Sallie Mae to college students, while Sallie Mae markets VarsityBooks.com's products and services to its 5.3 million loan customers. VarsityBooks.com will in turn promote Sallie Mae's campus-based loan products and services through its web site, e-mail newsletters, banner ads and other distribution channels.
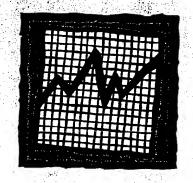
2001 postal rates may be heading higher for higher ed

The U.S. Postal Service has proposed some hefty hikes in postage rates for nonprofit organizations next January. Regular bulk mail rates for nonprofit groups would increase by 5.6 percent, while presorted bulk mail would rise 14.8 percent for nonprofits.

Periodicals rates for nonprofits would also go up, only 5 percent below the rates pegged for commercial periodicals. The price of a first class stamp would rise one cent. The proposal is under consideration by the Postal Rate Commission.

There's more than one way to build a portal

Besides outright acquisition, one of the best ways to build a company is through strategic partnerships. It's no different with e-businesses. Student Advantage, Inc., is following that path in higher education. The seven-year-old company just signed a marketing and distribution agreement with two-year-old E-commerce site provider edu.com, as well as a marketing and content distribution partnership with Mascot Network, a newly established provider of online student centers.

The edu.com deal included a $4.5 million equity investment in edu.com by Student Advantage. Raymond Sozzi, CEO of Student Advantage, now sits on edu.com's board of directors, as the two companies vie for their share of what Student Advantage estimates is $120 billion of student spending annually.

Their access is through The Student Advantage Network, launched in September 1999, which features the studentadvantage.com website and a variety of online student services including U-Wire, a daily college-focused news service written by member students from college newspapers, and FANSonly, a college sports network.

Cambridge, Mass.-based Mascot currently provides community, content, communication and commerce services for higher education institutions such as Arizona State University, Williams College, Providence College, and Springfield Technical Community

College. For more information, click on www.mascot.com, or phone Student Advantage at (617) 912-2011.

Online surveys made secure

Remark Web Survey 1.1 enables password-protected surveys controlled by an administrator. The product requires no HTML knowledge. Wizards are used to create and publish survey forms. It integrates with Remark Office OMR, which is forms processing and tabulation software that uses common PC image scanners to collect data. Users can convert paper-based surveys into on-line surveys, and combine the results from both sources. Remark Office OMR then analyzes the data or exports it to a spreadsheet or database package.

Remark Web Survey carries a single-copy price of $349, with multi-user packs available. Remark Office OMR carries a price tag of $449. Both are available from Principia Products, at (800) 858-0860 or www.PrincipiaProducts.com.

Tracking down E-mail ROI

eTracks.com has launched a service that helps clients understand why a customer buys — or doesn't buy — whatever they're selling. Adaptive Proxy Tracking (APT) monitors E-mail recipients as they click through a web site and either purchase a product/service or exit the site for any reason.

Traditional E-mail marketing solutions provide information on when an E-mail was received, when it was opened, what mail reader was used, and on which link the recipient clicked through. APT goes well beyond, following the path of the recipient throughout the site, seeing whether the recipient followed the intended path, whether the recipient purchased products/services, and whether the client's web site was intuitive and interactive enough to maintain the customer's attention.